

Path to Dharma

தர்ம நெறி (Dharma Neri)

58



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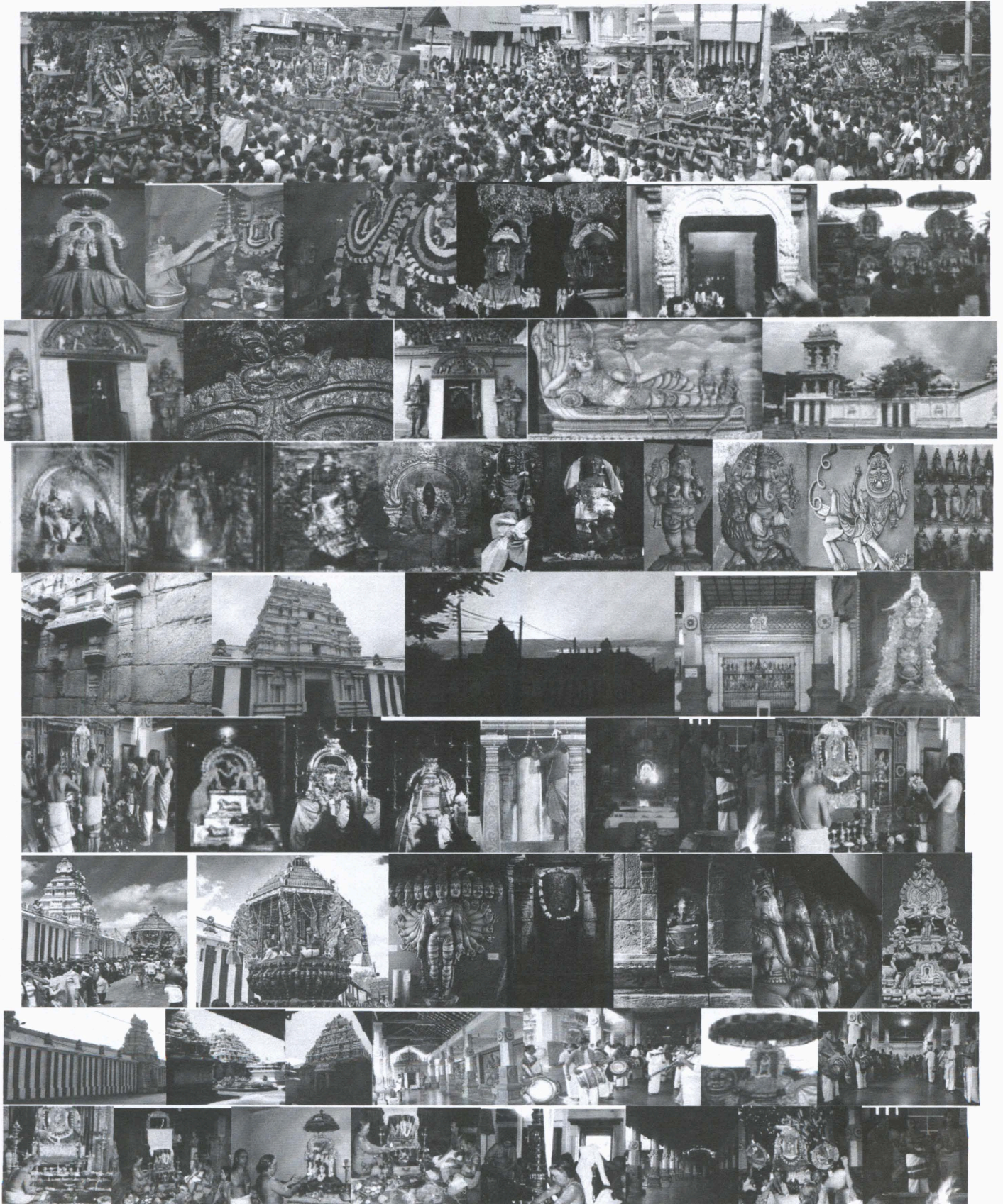
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Editorial

' Path to Darma' the monthly magazine, published by Kshethra Vinayaka Temple, Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka, is presenting the 58th issue this month. The main intention of this magazine is to converse the perceptions linked to Hinduism and its ceremonial rituals, customs and dharma, to the anxious readers.

The elucidation and investigation from the readers are appreciated.

B.Sivaramakrishna Sarma,
Kshethra Vinayaka Temple,
Sri Munneswaram, Chilaw, Sri Lanka.,October, 2012

Quatations

“ For the building of a temple,it must have a lake on the left (north) or in front (east),and not otherwise. If the temple is built on an island, the presence of water all around is of goodomen”

-Vishnu Dharmotrara Pura, 3.93.30-31

“ He who undertakes the architect's job without knowing the science of architecture (vastu shastra), or boasts of false knowledge,shall be condemned to death by the king, because he is an 'enemy of the kingdom (rajahimsaka)' ”

-Samarangana Sutradhara, 44. 6-8

“ the temple,a work of art by men,is an imitation of divine forms.Only by following their rhythem is it possible to reconstitute them,within the limitations of human ability”

-Aitareya Brahmana, 6.5.27

“The body (akriti) of the temple represents Prakriti,primodial nature”

-Agni Purana,61.25

“Just as a man closely entwined with the woman he desires no longer distinguishes the outside from the inside,so the man who embraces the divine no longer distinguishes between outside and inside.In it he finds his real form,the one that satisfies his desire, the supreme being who is all that is desirable.Desire and pain exist no more.”

-Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.3.21

“Just as in the embrace of his beloved, a man forgets the entire world, all that exists within himself and without,so in union with the Being of knowledge, he no longer knows anything,either within or without”

-Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 4.3.21

“ I am the Eros that exists in procreation”

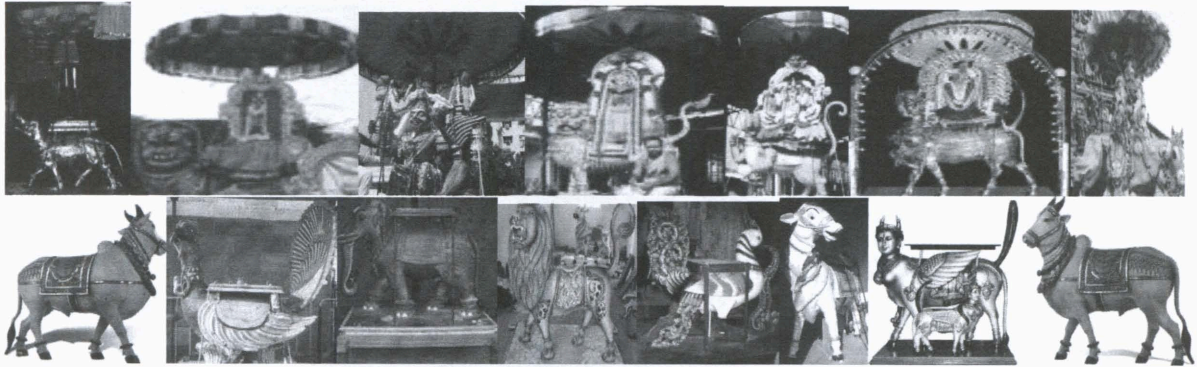
-Bhagavad Gita, 10.28

“Renouncing all virtues, seek thy refuge in Myself alone”

-Bhagavad Gita, 18.66

1. Give an account of Vahanas seen in Hindu temples?

A vahana is a vehicle or the carrier of a particular divine being. The vehicles of the gods and goddesses in Hinduism are animal mounts that the gods/goddesses ride. All the Hindu gods and Hindu goddesses are represented as using vahanas to identify and separate themselves; each vahana (vehicle) is entirely different from one another and always symbolic. Vāhana (*that which carries, that which pulls*) of a particular deity denotes the being, mainly an animal or mythical entity, a particular *deva* is said to use as a vehicle. *Vah* in Sanskrit means *to carry* or *to transport*. In this sense, the *vāhana* is known as the deity's *mount*.



The *deva* (or *devī*, who will have her own, unique *vāhana*) may be seen sitting on, or standing on, the *vāhana*. They may be sitting on a small platform called a *howdah*, or riding on a saddle or bareback.

On this relationship between the deity (*deva*) and his *vāhana* there is a connection of iconography and mythology. Often, the *deva* is iconographically portrayed travelling or else merely mounted upon the *vāhana*. All the other instances, the *vāhana* is depicted at the deity's side or symbolically represented as a divine power.



The *vāhana* may be regarded as an accoutrement of the divinity, even though the *vāhana* may act autonomously, they are still functionally emblematic. According to Hindu iconography, positive characteristics of the vehicle are often emblematic of the deity that the *vāhana* carries.

1. The bull (Nandi) which is the vehicle of Siva, represents strength and virility.
2. The peacock, (Parvati) vehicle of Skanda, represents splendor and majesty.
3. The swan (Hansa), vehicle of Saraswati, represents wisdom, grace and beauty.



On the other hand, the vehicle animal also symbolizes the evil forces over which the deity dominates.

1. Mounted on peacock (Parvati), Skanda reins in the peacock's vanity.

2. Seated on mouse (Mushika) , Ganesh crushes useless thoughts, multiply like rats in the dark.
3. Mounted on a vulture, (raven or crow) Shani, protect from evils.
- Below is a list of Hindu gods and goddesses who are inseparably linked with their respective vahanas':

List of Vahanas and Deities associated

Vahana	Deities associated
i. Antelope	<i>Chandra , Vayu</i>
ii. Camel	<i>Momai Maa (aka Dasha Maa), Ushtravahini, Devi, Kalyana, Anajaneya</i>
iii. Cat	<i>Shashti</i>
iv. Cockerel	<i>Bahuchara Mata</i>
v. Cow	<i>Ushas (chariot of seven cows)</i>
vi. Crocodile (Makara)	<i>Shukra, Varuna</i>
vii. Crow	<i>Shani, Alakshmi, Dhumavati</i>
viii. Dog	<i>Bhairava, Hadkai Maa</i>
ix. Donkey	<i>Kaalratri, Shitala , Kali (demon)</i>
x. Eagle	<i>Ketu</i>
xi. Elephant	<i>Lakshmi, Indra(elephant, Airavata,), Indrani, Brihaspati, Vishwakarma</i>
xii. Garuda	<i>Vishnu (Garuda, the eagle & Adi Shesha, the serpent) KrishnaVaishi</i>
xiii. Goat	<i>Pushan</i>
xiv. Hamsa (goose/ swan)	<i>Brahma, Sarasvati, Brahmani, Hingraj Mata, Varuna 7 swans</i>
xv. Horse	<i>Vayu - a thousand horses, Horse-Budha, Chandra (chariot of 10 white horses), Indra (chariot pulled by a horse named Uchchaihshravas, Surya (chariot pulled by seven horses or a seven-headed horse), Kubera, Kalki, Aditya - seven horses</i>
xvi. Lion	<i>Durga</i>
xvii. Makara	<i>Ganga, Varuna Kama</i>
xviii. Man	<i>Kubera</i>
xix. Mouse / shrew/ Mushika	<i>Ganesha</i>
xx. Nandi (bull)	<i>Shiva, Parvati, Maheshvari.</i>
xxi. Owl	<i>Lakshmi , Chamunda</i>
xxii. Parrot	<i>Kama</i>
xxiii. Peacock	<i>Murugan (peacock named Parvani, Kartikya, Saraswati</i>
xxiv. Pigeon	<i>Rati</i>
xxv. Ram	<i>Agni , Chandra (chariot of 10 rams).</i>
xxvi. Snake	<i>Kamakhya, Manasa</i>
xxvii. Tiger (Dawon)	<i>Ayyappan, Durga or Parvati</i>
xxviii. Tortoise	<i>Yamuna, Varuna</i>
xxix. Vulture	<i>Shani</i>
xxx. Water Buffalo	<i>Yama , Varahi, Vihot Mata</i>

In Hinduism, almost all the animals are considered to be sacred. However, given below are some of the important animals and the reason that they are considered sacred.

Jambavantha:

Jambavantha, (Jambavan or Jamvanta) is the Asiatic Black Bear in Hindu myths and is supposed to have lived from Thretha Yuga to Dwapara Yuga. In the famous epic Ramayana, Jambavantha assisted Sri Rama to locate his wife Sita's location and fight her abductor, Ravana.

Cock:

The cock is the emblem on Lord Murugan's battle flag (seval kodi). It denotes the eternity of time.

Deer:

The Spotted deer is linked with numerous legends in Hindu mythology. In the epic Ramayana, the Spotted deer named 'Mareecha' took the form of a golden deer in order to draw the interest of Sita.

Gecko:

The Indian golden gecko is revered in the east and south as an animal whose mere touch assures a person of moksha (liberation) of the soul. As it is not possible to touch one, several temples keep a golden replica to be touched for good luck. In some temples gold and silver geckos are attached to the ceiling to be touched by devotees for good luck.

Shrew:

The shrew is the vahana (vehicle) of Lord Ganesha. In Hindu mythology, Lord Ganesha is accompanied by the shrew wherever he travels.



Indian Ringneck Parakeet:

Indian Ringneck Parakeet is a sacred bird to Goddess Meenakshi, who is depicted holding a parakeet in her right hand at Meenakshi temple at Madurai. Indian Ringneck Parakeet bird is linked with Sri Andal, one of the twelve Alvars (the renowned saints of Vaishnavism). According to myth, the parrot is Sri Suka Brahma Rishi, who was sent by Saint Andal to Lord Ranganatha as thootu (messenger).

Sarus Crane:

The bird is looked upon as a good sign for crops in India. According to a legend Sage Valmiki cursed a hunter for killing a Sarus crane. It is believed that the happening inspired the sage Valmiki to write the epic Ramayana.

Tortoise:

Kurma was the second avatara of Lord Vishnu, where He Lord Vishnu incarnated in the form of a gigantic tortoise and sat at the bottom of the ocean in His second avatara the Kurma avatara. Lord Vishnu helped the devatas (devas) reach amrita or the nectar of immortality, from the celestial ocean, by holding the mountain, Mandara on his back. The tortoise is the vahana of Goddess Jamuna, who characterizes the holy river Yamuna.

Lion:

Goddess Durga, possess lion as her vahana. Narasimha, the fourth incarnation of Lord Vishnu was half-man (Nara) and half-lion (Simha). He killed a demon named Hiranyakashipu.

Garuda

Garuda, the celestial carrier or vahana of Lord Vishnu and his consort, Goddess Lakshmi, is a swift-flying Brahminy kite. In Hindu mythology, Garuda is considered the 'king of birds'. He has been give the status of a deity by the religious scriptures. In most Vishnu temples, there is a separate shrine for Garuda (Garudalwar).

Dog:

Lord Dattatreya, is believed as the incarnation of the holy Trinity - Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Lord Dattatreya is shown to be followed by four dogs, which symbolically represent the four Vedas (Rig Veda, Yajr Veda, Sama Veda & Atharvana Veda) and his complete mastery over them.

Pigeon:

Goddess Rathi, the Goddess of passion and desire and the consort of Kama, the God of love, is said to be illustrated with a pigeon as her vahana.

Langur Monkey:

Hanuman. is a loyal devotee of Rama. The notable vanaras who feature in the epic Ramayana are Sugriva, Vali and Angada.

Indian Cobra:

Lord Siva, is shown to wear a Cobra twisting around his neck. This symbolises the power the Lord has over the deadliest of creatures. The cobra have are associated with wealth, power and fertility. Lord Vishnu also relaxes on a curved cobra, the **Adi-sesha** in Vaikuntam. Nagapanchami is a significant festival in Hindu religion linked with the worship of snake. Nagapanchami is observed and celebrated on the fifth day in the month of Shravana (July - August).

Peacock:

The peacock the divine vahana of Lord Murugan and named Paravani. It is supposed in a puranic account there was a fight between Lord Muruga and a demon known as Surapadman. The demon Surapadman acquired the appearance of a gigantic mango tree. This mango tree was wrecked into two halves by the spear (vael) of Lord Muruga. From one half emerged a rooster and from the other a peacock. Lord Muruga took the peacock as His vahana and the cock as His symbol in His flag.

The Goddess Saraswathy is usually shown with a peacock in the background. A feather of peacock is usually shown on the crown of Lord Krishna. It is said that whenever Lord Indra transformed himself into an animal form, he is believed to assume the appearance of a peacock.

Vulture:

In the famous epic Ramayana it is believed, that when king Ravana was abducting Sitha to his kingdom of Lanka, a ferocious fight cropped up place between the king Ravana and the vulture king, Jatayu. The vulture king, Jatayu was seriously wounded in the effort to rescue Sitha from king Ravana. The vulture king, Jatayu survived long enough to inform Lord Rama about the abduction of Sitha by king Ravana.

Sampathi is a different vulture, mentioned in the prominent epic Ramayana, is the brother of Jatayu. Sampathi was very affectionate of Jatayu. On one occasion when both the brothers Jatayu and Sampathi were young, tried to fly close to the sun. Jatayu nearly got his wings burnt. Seeing his brother in suffering, Sampati flew higher and shielded his brother from the rays of the beam of sun light. In the course of action he burnt his wings. Sampati took a key role in this epic Ramayana by confirming Sitha's abduction to Lanka and her imprisonment in Ashoka - vana.

Tiger:

The tiger is related with Lord Ayyappan of Sabarimala in Kerala state, According to legend, Ayyappan, was found by a king and queen on the banks of a river and brought him to their palace. When the queen gave birth to a baby, she turned out to be jealous of Ayyappan and intended to get him killed. She pretended to be ailing and sent Ayyappan to go and get tiger's milk to heal her illness. The

queen expected Ayyappan, to be killed by the tigers and was astonished to see Ayyappan return to the palace riding on a tiger, with the other tigers following him. Lord Siva is often portrayed wearing or seated on a tiger skin. The Lord also bears the name Vyaghranatheshwara' (Vyaghra means tiger + Natheswar means Lord), because he once had slain a demon, who had taken the form of a tiger.

Kamadhenu;

The cow / bull occupy a special place in Hindu culture. In Hindu mythology, Kamadhenu, the wish-fulfilling celestial cow, is said to be the mother of all Gods. It is believed that she could grant any wish for the true seeker.

Cow:

Cow is usually coupled with Lord Krishna, who is usually depicted as a cowherd. Lord Krishna is also known as Gopala, (the protector of cows).

Fish (matsya):, Lord Vishnu took the form of a matsya (fish) in His first avatara.

Swan:

Saraswathi, the Hindu Goddess of wisdom, knowledge and learning uses a white swan as her vahana and therefore, is referred to as Hamsavahini. The swan is also the carrier of Lord Brahma, the creator.

Buffalo:

The buffalo is usually allied with Yama, the Hindu God of death. He is usually depicted riding a fierce-looking black male water buffalo.



Antelope:

Vayu, (God of wind) has an antelope as his vahana. Its ability to run swiftly has probably led to this association with the wind God. The animal is also the vahana of Chandra, the Hindu moon-God.

Crow:

The crow is also the vahana of Lord Saneeshwara (astrologically equated to Planet Saturn), one of the navagrahas or nine planets. The crow is usually identified with departed souls or ancestors. Throughout the country, certain communities observe the ritual of 'pinda pradhana' (offering of cooked rice balls) to the crow, during ancestral worship. The crow is supposed to be a connection between the living world and the world of the dead.

Horse:

The chariot of Lord Surya is pulled by seven horses known as Saptashva. One of the manifestations of Lord Vishnu is Hayagriva, where His face bears a resemblance to that of a horse. Lord Kubera, the Hindu God of wealth possesses horse as his vehicle.



Elephant:

The elephant is associated with Goddess Lakshmi. One of the eight (Ashtalakshmi) manifestations of Lakshmi is known as Gajalakshmi. One of the nine rathas of the (navarathnas) is a white elephant named Airavata, which later became the mount of Lord Indra.

Squirrel:

During the construction of the Adi Sethu (bridge) at Rameswaram by Lord Rama and the vanara sena, a little squirrel contributed in its own services in a little means. It rolled in the beach sand and then ran to the end of the Sethu to shake off the sand from its back.

Lord Rama, was very much pleased by the dedication of the squirrel and caressed the squirrel's back and ever since, the squirrel carried white stripes on its back, which are believed to be the mark of Lord Rama's fingers.

Wild Boar:

Varaha (a boar) is the third avatara of Lord Vishnu. Varaha is generally depicted having a boar's head on a human body.

Varahi is the Hindu Goddess Durga in the form of a wild boar. She is regarded as the consort of Varaha and one of the saptamatrikas.

The vehicle of a deity can vary according to the source, the time, and the place. In popular tradition, the origin of each vehicle is told in many different traditions. Three examples are given below:

- Prior to Nandi becoming the mount vehicle of Lord Siva, Nandi was a deity known as Nandikeshvara, Lord of bliss and master of music and dance. Then, without warning, his name and his functions were transferred to the aspect of Siva known as the deity Nataraja. From half-man, half-bull, he became simply a bull and functioned as a vahana to Lord Siva. Since then, he watches the Lord Siva in Shiva temples, always looking towards him seated in front of the main deity, Lord Siva
- When Ganesh was still a child, a gigantic mouse started to frighten all his associates. On one occasion at that time Ganesh trapped the gigantic mouse with his lasso and equipped the mouse as His mount. Mushika was originally a gandharva, or celestial musician. After inattentively walking over the feet of a Vamadeva rishi (a holy person), Mushika was distorted into a mouse. Nevertheless, later when the rishi recovered his temper, the rishi promised Mushika that 'one day, the gods themselves would bow down before him'. This is how mouse (Mushika) became the mount (vahana) of Lord Ganesh.

- peacock is the vahana of Lord Muruga. He is exposed to be mounted on a peacock. At the beginning this peacock was a demon known as Surapathma, while the rooster was called the angel (Krichi). After provoking Murugan in combat, the demon repented at the moment his lance descended upon him. He took the form of a tree and began to pray. The tree was cut in two. From one half, Murugan pulled a rooster, which he made his emblem, and from the other, a peacock, which he made his mount.

Vehicles as Symbols

Hindu deities have particular vehicles or 'vahana' on which they travel. These vehicles, which are either animals or birds, represent the various symbolic representations that he or she rides. Some examples are given below;

1. Siva rides the Nandi bull, which represents for the beast and blind power, as well as the unbridled sexual energy in man. The qualities of these nature could be controlled only by the Lord Siva.
2. Vishnu sits on the primal serpent, which represents the desire of consciousness in human-kind
3. Ganesha's carrier, a mouse (Mushika) represents the timidity and nervousness that overwhelm us at the onset of any new venture - feelings that can be overcome by the blessings of Ganesha.
4. Goddess Saraswati's vehicle, the graceful and beautiful peacock denotes that she is the controller of the pursuit of performing arts.
5. Goddess Parvati, Goddess Durga or Goddess Kali rides on a lion, which symbolizes mercilessness, anger and pride - vices the Goddess can help her devotees check.



2. Describe the importance of bilva (bel) leaf with reference to Hinduism?

Sacred leaves of bilva (**bel**) tree are commonly trifoliate. This trifoliate nature symbolizes the quality of Trimurti (brahma, vishnu and Siva), Three eyes of lord Siva, Trishakti (desire, deed and awareness), three lingas and three syllables of Aumkar(AUM). It is said that the trifoliate leaves symbolize the trident that Shiva holds in his right hand.

The bilva tree is considered auspicious and holy that its importance is cited in many scriptures of Hindu religion. An important recitation about the significance of bilva is seen in the 22nd chapter in *Vidyeshvara samhita* of *Sivapurana*. Hindu mythology shows that the tree is another form of Lord Kailashnath.

Skanda Purana narrates the origin of **Bilva tree** as follows "One day while Parvati was resting some drops of sweat fell from her forehead on the mountain Mandara. The bel tree grew from these drops of sweat. Girija lives on the root of the Bilva tree, Maheswari on its shoulder, Dukshayani on its branches, Parvati among its leaves, Katyayani in its fruit, Gowri in its flowers numerous Saktis live in the thorns. Lakshmi, the Goddess of Wealth, resides in the Bilva tree. Those who perform the puja of Shiva and Parvati devoutly, using the leaves, will be endowed with spiritual powers".

*Lakshmyascha stana utpannam Mahaadeva sadaa priyam,
Bilva vriksham prayachchhaami eka bilvam Shivaarpanam.*

***Darshanam bilva vrikshasya sparshanam paapanaashanam,
Aghorapaapasamhaaram eka bilvam shivarpanam.***

Sri Bilva Shtakam (v. 6–7) pronounce that, all the awful karmas are destroyed when a Bilva leaf is offered to Lord Siva with full devotion.

The proportion of sattva component is in plenty in leaf (patra) of Bilva tree. For this reason Bilva leaf has more competence to absorb and emit sattvik frequencies. One of the effects is the reduction of raja-tama particles present in the atmosphere. When a bilva leaf (sattvik patra) is taken in proximity to a person suffering from distress due to negative energy, then the harmful effect in the energy in him is reduced.

Our Vedic Scriptures also says that, Bel leaves (Bilva dalam) offered once in Siva Pooja can be used again (re-offered) to God the next day by sprinkling few drops of water on them. A devotee can offer the same Bilva leaf for 15 continuous days. Even though Belva leaves become dry, one can still use the dried one's in Siva pooja, such is the grateness of Belva leaf

The front portion of a Belva leaf denotes Amrutham" (Nectar of Immortality). So, while offering belva leaf, the front portion of the leaf should face Lord Siva.

According to Vastu-Sastra (Science of Architecture of construction), a house with Bilva Tree in:
North East - confers all kinds of wealth and eliminate every unforeseen risks.

East - Blesses with happiness, peace and good health.

West - Blesses with healthy progeny

South - Protects from troubles caused due to Yama.

Bael (*Aegle marmelos*- Linn), *Aegle marmelos* Correa, belongs to the family Rutaceae, is of moderate sized, slender, aromatic tree, of 6.0 -7.5 m in height, and 90 to 120 cm in girth, with a somewhat fluted bole of 3.0-4.5 meter growing wild throughout the deciduous forests. Bael (*Aegle marmelos*) is the only member of the monotypic genus *Aegle*.

Leaf, fruit, stem and root of this tree at all stages of maturity are used as Ayurvedic, Unani and Siddha systems of medicine against various human ailments. The different parts of Bael are used for various therapeutic purposes, such as for treatment of Asthma, Anaemia, Fractures, Healing of Wounds, Swollen Joints, High Blood Pressure, Jaundice, Diarrhoea Healthy Mind and Brain Typhoid Troubles during Pregnancy.

The unripe dried fruit is astringent, digestive, stomachic and used to cure diarrhea and dysentery. The ripe fruit is an excellent cure for dyspepsia. The roots and the bark of the tree are used in the treatment of various types of fever by making a decoction of them.

The chemical constituents of Bael (*Aegle marmelos*) is as follows;

The fruit of *Aegle marmelos* consists of moisture 61.5 per cent, protein 1.8 per cent, fat 0.3 per cent, minerals 1.7 per cent, fibre 2.9 per cent and carbohydrates 31.8 per cent per 100 grams of edible portion. Its mineral and vitamin contents include calcium (Ca), phosphorus (P), iron, (Fe) carotene, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin and vitamin C. Its calorific value is 137.

The chemical constituents that have been isolated from various parts of the bael tree include alkaloids, coumarins and steroids.

The leaf of *Aegle marmelos* contains skimianinc, sterol and aegelin. The fruit contains marmorosin, which is identical to imperatorin. The odour in fruits is due to altoimperatorin and B sitosterol. The psoralin, xanthotoxin, scopoletin and tembamide are found in the root of Bael tree.

Ripe fruit of *Aegle marmelos* cleanses and tones the intestines, and if taken for 2-3 months, it throws out the old accumulated faecal matters. The unripe fruit is used as a cure and prevention for scurvy, strengthens stomach tissues. The leaf in its powder form is used in peptic ulcers;

Medicinal uses of Aegle marmelos (Bael)

Bael, *Aegle marmelos* Correa. is known in aurvedic medicine for the treatment of diseases such as dysentery, fever, diabetes, asthma, heart problems, ophthalmia, haemorrhoids urinary problems in humans. The plant has been reported to contain several phytoconstituents mainly marmenol, marmin, marmelosin, marmelide, psoralen, alloimperatorin, rutaretin, scopoletin, aegelin, marmelin, fagarine, anhydromarmelin, limonene, â-phellandrene, betulinic acid, marmesin, imperatorin, marmelosin, luvangentin and auroptene.

Scientific analysis of Bael, *Aegle marmelos* Correa tree shows that it has anti-bilious, anti-parasitic, antipyretic, aphrodisiac, aromatic, alterative, astringent, digestive, stomachic, stimulant, tonic, and laxative properties.

Its Usefulness and Therapeutic Value

1. The medicinal value of Bael fruit is enhanced due to presence of Tanin, the evaporating component in its rind. The rind contains 20% and the pulp has 9% of Tanin. This substance helps to cure diabetes.
2. Treatment of Asthma - Add 1 spoon of honey to 5 gms. of grinded Bael leaves.. This is taken orally in morning and evening for relief from Asthma.
5. Healing of Wound - Take rind, root, leaves, fruit pulp of equal quantity. Grind them to extract juice. Add 10 gms. of honey. Drink it.
6. Swollen Joints - Few bael pulp is mixed with hot mustard oil and applied on the affected area twice a day during morning and evening for relief.
7. High Blood Pressure - Bael leaves to be taken every morning. The juice of bael leaves added with honey can also be taken every morning.
8. Jundice - Extract juice of 100 nos. of soft bael leaves. Mix it with the powder of 10 Nos. of black pepper. Take the mixture every morning and evening. Added to this take at least five glasses of sugarcane juice daily after meals.
9. Diarrhoea - Dry raw bael fruit pulp. Take out seeds. The dried pulp if consumed quickly, stops loose motion.
10. Troubles During Pregnancy - One spoon of raw fruit pulp if taken twice a day stops frequent vomiting nausea during pregnancy. Little sugar candy may be added to the pulp for taste.
11. Typhoid - Our body becomes weak due to high fever. Grind 200 bael leaves. Boil in one cup of water till it becomes thick. Take this paste with a little honey twice or thrice a day.
12. Healthy life of the brain - Ripe bael fruit is taken with fresh cream (butter) and sugar for the functioning of the brain, which in turn makes the person intelligence.

Bilwa Ashtakam Lyrics

Bilwa Ashtakam, is the ashtakam (ashtak) prayed to Lord Siva. Bilwa Ashtakam is a Siva stotra consists of eight hymns chanted while offering Bilwa (Vilva) leaves to Lord Siva.

Chanting Bilwa Ashtakam when offering Bilwa Leaf

***Tridalam Trigunakaaram Trinethram Cha Triyayusham,
Trijanma Papa Samharam Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 1***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
Which has three leaf - lets,
Which grounds three qualities,
Which are as the three eyes of Siva,
Which is similar to the triad of weapons,
And which annihilate sins of three births.

***Trishakhai Bilwathraisha Hyachidrai Komalai Shubai,
Siva Poojam Karishyami, Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 2***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
Which has three shoots,
Which do not have fissures,
Which are superior and sweet,
And adore Lord Siva.

***Aganda Bilwa Pathrena Poojithe Nandikeshware,
Shudhyanthi Sarva Papebhyo, Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 3***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
For if a full, uncut leaf is offered,
To his mount the god Nandikeswara,
We get freshend from all our sins.

***Salagrama Shilamekaam Vipranam Jatha Cha Arpayeth,
Soma Yagna Maha Punyam, Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 4***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
For it is identical to, contributing a Saligrama to a Brahmin,
Or the great blessing got out of conducting performing Soma Yaga,

***Dandi Koti Sahasrani Vajapeya Sathani Cha,
Koti Kanya Maha Danam, Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 5***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
For it is equivalent to donating thousand elephants,
Or the carrying out of hundred thousand (koti) fire sacrifices,
Or giving away billions of girls.

***Lakshmyasthanutha Uthpannam Mahadevasya Cha Priyam,
Bilwa Vruksham Prayachami, Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 6***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
For it is as giving a tree of Bilwa,
Which was originated from the breast of Lakshmi,
And which is extremely precious to the Siva.

***Darshanam Bilwa Vrukshasya, Sparsanam Papa Nasanam,
Aghora Papa Samharam, Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 7***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
As perceiving and touching of a tree of Bilwa,
Washes away ones sins and all the dreadful enormous sins.

***Kasi Kshethra Nivasam Cha Kala Bhairava Darshanam,
Prayaga Madhavam Drushtwa, Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 8***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
After living in the city of Kasi,
Looking the Kala Bhairawa,
And in addition visiting the temple
Of Madhawa in Kasi Kshethra Nivasam.

***Moolatho Brahma Roopaya, Madhyatho Vishnu Roopine
Agratha Siva Roopaya, Eka Bilwam Sivarpanam 9***

I submit one leaf of Bilwa to Lord Siva,
As Brahma exist in at its underside,
Lord Vishnu lives in its center,
And Lord Siva lives in its apex.

***Bilwashtakam Idham Punyaam, Padeth Siva Sannidhou,
Sarva Papa Nirmuktha Siva Loka Maapnuayath 10***

Reading this holy octet of Bilwa,
In the presence of Lord Siva,
Would put away one from all sins,
And at the conclusion take him to the world of Siva.

3. Give an account of the sacred Thulasi plant?

Tulsi (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) is a perennial herb, the foliage is green or purple, strongly scented. Leaves have petioles, and are ovate, up to 5 cm long, usually slightly toothed of the family Lamiaceae.

Sri Andal refers to Thulsi as "Natrathuzhai" meaning as a scented beautiful smelly Holy Basil. Srivaishnavas, refer to Thulsi as Thiru - thuzhai. Thulsi is known for many traditions of Sri vaishnavites and is a symbol of purity.

Tulsi is a religious symbol of Hindu traditions that link the plant with the Goddess about which the ancient Puranic scripts narrate. The name "Tulasi" in Sanskrit literally means "the incomparable one".

The Tulasi plant is grown in two forms, namely. Krishna Tulsi has dark green leaves and is important for the worship of Vishnu and Rama Tulsi has light green leaves and is larger in size. The Charaka Samhita (a nodal Ayurvedic script) and The Rig-Veda, mention Tulsi as a life saving herb which consists of 'elixir of life' which promotes longevity.

Padaartha Guna Chinthamani, Agasthiyar Kural. Dhanvantri, Sushrutha Samhita, Charaka Samhita, Ashtangahridya, etc., are the ancient scripts which describe the medicinal values of Thulasi plant.

Vaishnavas traditionally use japa malas made from tulsi stems or roots, which are an important symbol of initiation. Tulsi malas (garlands) are considered to be auspicious for the wearer. A very detailed account of the plant 'tulsi' (*Ocimum sanctum*) was already given in one of the earlier magazine which is given below as an attachment.

The Tulsi plant has many medicinal properties. The holy basil is also a herbal medicine for a large number of common sicknesses. Drinking the water, in which some sacred Tulasi leaf was soaked in, will reduce the stress.

Tulasi is a divine sacred plant according to Hindu religion. There are plenty of legends to narrate how the herb Tulasi came into existence and considered as a sacred aromatic plant worthy of worshipping. The traditional Hindu legend, Samudramathana, the "Churning of the Cosmic Ocean," elucidates, that Lord Vishnu spawned Tulasi from the turbulent ocean as a vital medicinal basil for all mankind.

More legends describe how the Goddess Herself came to reside on Earth as Tulasi. Another important allegory shows that the plant as the fourth incarnation of the Goddess who appeared as Tulasi at the beginning of the present age, the Kali yuga.

Generally, worshippers of Lord Vishnu will envisage Tulasi as Goddess Lakshmi or Goddess Vrinda; devotees of Lord Rama may view Tulasi as Sita; while Lord Krishna bhaktas revere Her as Goddess Vrinda, Goddess Radha or Goddess Rukmani.

In Sanskrit the term Tulasi that which is incomparable and the most sacred is called Tulasi. Impressed by her devotion and adherence to righteousness, Tulasi the wife of a celestial being was blessed by Lord Krishna that she would be worshipped by all, offerings would be incomplete without the offering of Tulasi. She also symbolises Goddess Lakshmi. Those who wish a righteous life also worship Tulasi.

The qualities of Tulasi are:

- 1) Kalyani - Normally poisonous snakes and mosquitos do not come close to it due to some smell that it emits. That explains why it is a must in every house. The leaves as well roots are a cure for several diseases like malaria, cold, fever, acidity. The wood of this plant is used for japa Mala, a rosary for worship of Lord Vishnu and when worn in the neck it prevents diseases of the throat.
- 2) Visnu Priya - Tulasi is normally expressed as the beloved of Lord Vishnu as he is the creator and Tulasi helps the health of human beings and animals, prevents soil erosion.
- 3) Moksha prada – While maintaining the body in healthy condition, it keeps the mind healthy and free of worries enabling us to concentrate on worship of the Ultimate Reality with peace of mind.

Tulsi, along with all other species of basil, possesses remarkable physical and spiritually healing properties. Tulasi has been praised in Indian scriptures and lore since the time of the early Vedas as an herb that cures blood and skin diseases. Ancient treatises extol it as an antidote for poisons, a curative for kidney disease and arthritis, a preventative for mosquito and insect bites, and a purifier of polluted air.

Tulasi is used to maintain ritual purity, to purify if polluted and to ward off evil. A leaf is kept in the mouth of the dying to insure passage to heavenly realms. During an eclipse, leaves are ingested and also placed in cooked food and stored water to ward off psychic pollution. Funeral pyres often contain Tulasi wood to protect the spirit of the dead as Bhutagni, destroyer of demons. Tulasi leaves and sprigs are hung in the entryways of homes to keep away troublesome spirits, and the mere presence of the Tulasi shrine is said to keep the entire home pure, peaceful and harmonious.

Scientific studies have established and the results show the importance and the medicinal significance of this herb which are summarised as follows;

- The juice of Tulasi with a small quantity when taken reduces the Blood Cholesterol

- The juice of Tulasi with honey, push out the kidney stone
- The juice of Tulasi leave could be used to lower the temperature of the fever.
- Chewing Tulasi leaves provides a incredible relief from cold and flu.
- Goggling by the Tulasi boiled water relieves the sore throat.
- A few drops of the juice of KrishnaTulasi leaves in eyes will soothe the sour eyes.
- The paste of Tulasi roots is commenly used as a remedy for insect bites
- Chewing Tulasi leave will rescue from the mouth infections.
- Appling Tulasi paste reduces the pains like headache.

Tulsi Sthothram

Yenmoole Sarvatheerthaani Yenmadhye Sarvadevatha Yadagre Sarva Vedaascha Thulaseem-tham Namamyaham

Meaning: I bow down to the Tulasi at whose base are all the holy places, at whose top reside all deities and on whose middle are all the Vedas.

Tulasi (*Ocimum sanctum*) is one of the most sacred plants in the Hindu worship rituals and in aurvedic treatment. Tulasi gives Sattwa,(positivity) and healing power. It smoothns the heart beat, refreshes the mind, increases the sense of spiritual love, and enhances devotion, faith, compassion and clarity. In addition it helps to develop pure awareness.

The juice of the leaf of Tulasi helps to enhance the quality of Rasa Dhatu (nutrient plasma), Rakta Dhatu (blood), Majja Dhatu (bone marrow and nerves) as well as Shukra Dhatu (reproductive fluids).All the offerings in a ritual would be incomplete without using the leaf. The *tulasi* leaf has great medicinal value and is used to cure various ailments, including the common cold.

The decoction of the green Thulsi leaf obtained by boiling basil leaves in water is taken as a medicine for sore throat in aurvedic treatment. The juice of Thulsi leaves is very valuable for the treatment of skin diseases. It has also been tried successfully by some naturopaths in the treatment of leucoderma.

The decoction of the green Thulsi leaf helps in activating the function of the kidneys. The leaf of Thulsi is an important constituent of many Ayurvedic cough syrups and expectorants. It helps to mobilize mucus in bronchitis and asthma. Chewing Thulsi leaves relieves cold and flu.

The leaves are considered as a stimulant for nervous disorders. It increases memory power. The leaves encourage the elimination of the catarrhal wastes and phlegm from the bronchial system. The leaves strengthen the stomach and induce bountiful perspiration. Ordinary pediatric problems such as coughs, colds, fever, diarrheas vomiting etc. respond satisfactorily to the decoction of the Thulsi leaves.

The leaves are very effective against all the infections of the mouth In the rainy season, when malaria and dengue fever are widely prevalent, tender leaves, boiled with tea, act as a preventive against these diseases, and is used in villages as follows; A handful of Thulsi leaves are boiled with cardamom powder in 500 ml of water and this decoction is used to bring down the body temperature. The Thulsi leaf is useful for the treatment of teeth problems. The Thulsi leaves are dried powdered and used for brushing teeth. It can also be mixed with mustared oil to make a paste and used as toothpaste. It is also useful in pyorrhea and other teeth disorders according to aurvedic treatment

The herb is useful in the treatment of respiratory disorders. A decoction of the leaves, with honey and ginger is an effective remedy for bronchitis, asthma, influenza, cough and cold. A decoction of the leaves, cloves and common salt also gives immediate relief in case of influenza. They should be boiled in half a liter of water till only half the water is left and add then taken. Basil juice is an effective remedy for sore eyes which is generally caused by deficiency of vitamin A. A few drops of the juice taken from the black type of Thulsi leaves are put into the eyes for a few days to over come this problem. Thulsi leaf has a favorable effect in cardiac ailments.

Kshethra Vinayaka(Vayal Vinayayaka) Temple, Munneswaram, SriLanka



